1: Thurston & Rangachari E,G-4,5 (no date) 1909
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The Badagas live in dread of the Kurumbas, and the Kurumba constantly comes under reference in their folk-stories. The Kurumba is the necromancer of the hills, and believed to be possessed of the power of outraging women, removing their livers, and so causing their death, while the wound heals by magic, so that no trace of the operation is left. He is supposed, too, to have the power of opening the bolts of doors by magic, and effecting an entrance into a house at night for some nefarious purpose. The Toda or Badaga requires the services of the Kurumba, when he fancies that any member of his family is possessed of the devil, or when he wants to remove the evil eye, to which he imagines that his children have been subjected. The Kurumba does his best to remove the malady by repeating various mantrams (magical formulæ). If he fails, and if any suspicion is aroused in the mind of the Toda or Badaga that he is allowing the devil to play his pranks instead of loosing his hold on the supposed victim, woe betide him. The wrath of the entire village, or even the whole tribe, is raised against the unhappy Kurumba. His hut is surrounded at night, and the entire household massacred in cold blood, and their huts set on fire. This is very cleverly carried out, and the isolated position of the Kurumba settlements allows of very little clue for identification. In 1835 no less than fifty-eight Kurumbas were thus murdered, and a smaller number in 1875 and 1882. In 1891 the live inmates of a single hut were murdered, and their hut burnt to ashes, because, it was said, one of them who had been treating a sick Badaga child failed to cure it. The crime was traced to some Kotas in conjunction with Badagas, but the District Judge disbelieved the evidence, and all who were charged were acquitted. Every Badaga family pays an annual

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4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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343 amorous affairs. If a man wanted a particular girl he would note
841 when she went to the menstrual hut, and would then persuade a
837 female friend to stay in the hut with her and turn her fancy away from her husband and towards this unannounced suitor. A girl's parents or husband would therefore keep a careful watch on who else was in the hut. In a small hamlet, on the other hand, the female
343 population might be so little that a woman would often find herself
84[alone in the hut. In that case she would be afraid to sleep there by
•754 herself for fear of Kurumba sorcerers and ghosts. (This fear ran counter to the Badaga belief that Kurumbas themselves were afraid of
775 menstruating women, and hence would never enter the hut and secretly ravish or attack any menstruating woman through sorcery.) Because of this fear, a woman who was alone in the hut would persuade another who was due to menstruate in the next few days to tell her family the period had already begun, so that the two could sleep together in the hut. This ruse would not allow the second woman to spend extra time in the hut however, and she might well continue to menstruate after leaving it, but would keep the matter
841 secret. Sometimes a woman would be already pregnant when she
843 entered the hut for such purely social reasons. Since the number
343 of weeks until she came to term might be calculated from the last day a woman was in the hut, it therefore could happen that she gave birth in what seemed to be the eighth month of pregnancy.

841 When a group of women were together in the menstrual hut they
517 could engage in a number of interesting activities. The only work they were permitted to do was to gather firewood for use there, prepare their own food, and wash their clothes (at a place separate from
[304] the usual spot). It was generally while in the hut that an adolescent girl underwent tattooing. The only game the women played was
[524] "eye-bean," an ancient Old World game which involved the redistribution of beans in a series of a dozen depressions. In general girls were not allowed to play this until they had their first pregnancy, but younger girls did play it too while in the menstrual hut.

841 Cooking vessels kept in the hut were common to the whole village,
415 and were in constant use. There was no need to destroy or even purify them after use, since everyone involved with them was in a state
264 of pollution. Foodstuffs could be given to the women by their rela-
[783] tives, but it was taboo to give them cooked foods. No pot, basket or cloth would be taken to the hut with food, since it could not be taken back home afterwards. Thus when a woman in the hut was

853 761 (753)

"bad wind" unless the death occurred in her own home. The effect of a "bad wind" the woman has encountered can also be felt by her baby or transmitted through the milk to her baby, and then it will make him sick.

585 853 783 (574)

One or two days after a wedding the bride, by this time perhaps no longer a virgin, returns on a belief ceremonial visit to her parents' home. As she enters the village the woman accompanying her calls out for people to keep infants and nursing mothers out of sight. The bride can set eyes on unweaned infants, but their parents must make sure that neither the children themselves nor their mothers see the girl, lest their milk dry up by reason of the "bad wind" associated with the girl's recent sexual activity. Were a nursing mother to see the bride she would probably curse her, and this could cause infertility in the latter. (754)

783 574 853

More generally it is felt that the most dangerous "bad wind" would be one associated with a person who came to look at the baby just after having had intercourse. Such a person should first take a bath, then put on some clean clothes and wait at least half-an-hour. In the same way if an apparently pure man comes to visit a baby and he has travelled more than a mile he will bring a "bad wind" with him. He should therefore wait in the yard or on the veranda for a short time before entering the house. In this situation the mother would even wait the appropriate amount of time before bowing to his hand if the visitor were her own father. If a nursing mother is obliged to be near a corpse, she also will take a bath and change afterwards before going near her baby. Should an unweaned baby die all other nursing mothers in the village and neighbouring hamlets are expected to visit the bereaved house before the next sunset. They ask the unfortunate mother how she is feeling. Badagas believe that if any nursing mother who was inregular contact with this woman failed to observe this common courtesy, her own infant would soon become ill. And if such a woman nonetheless does fail to visit she must not set eyes on the bereaved mother again until after the next new or the next full moon. This is said to be because the latter might become envious on seeing the other mother nursing, and her sorrow would somehow affect that woman. The nursing mother who failed in this customary courtesy would be afraid that her breasts would dry up, should she meet the bereaved woman shortly after burial of the dead child.

853 783 764 (753) (754)

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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164 754 6.53. Badagas sometimes attribute stomach pains to sorcery. Witness a nineteenth century account:

> . . .he complained. . .that there was a hardness in his stomach, as if there was a piece of wood in it. . .A few days after, however, I was ... informed that the man had died, and was asked to attend the funeral. On my reaching the spot, the father of the deceased begged me earnestly to open and examine the body. . ., because he and all his relations were convinced that one of the sacrificing Kurumbas had been bribed . . . to destroy the lad's life by magic. I declined to interfere, defend the poor Kurumba. . . On my repairing to the place again next morning. . .I was met by all the people, who told me that. . . on examining the ashes of the burnt corpse in their presence, the sacrificing Kurumba himself had taken from the stomach, two legs of a fowl and a piece of cactus, reduced to charcoal, and also some raw grain half consumed by the flames; which fully accounted for the violent pain in that region. . .(Metz 1864 : 121-22).

752 (539) 6.54. A proverb asks rhetorically, "If a man has eaten poison and is dying, will he survive if given milk ?" Badagas believe that milk is not an antidote for poison, and that the only cure is to make the man vomit. This is simply achieved by forcing him to swallow cowdung mixed with onion or garlic, or alternatively a mixture of dog dung and garlic.

POISONING (*maddu timbadu*)

164 751 6.55. Constipation occurs because the body is "over-heated"; it is commonly a result of eating a large plantain or the olive linden fruit. One earlier treatment called for an opium poppy head ; but because of the difficulty of getting it the medicine is no longer prepared. In that treatment a poppy head was soaked in a pot of water over-

CONSTIPATION (*sege*)

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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842 be that way for every thousand women who are. It is not assumed that a women is barren if her first marriage produces no children, however: the couple should divorce and both remarry, in order to have children with other spouses. By this procedure it will be seen whether a person is really infertile. Badagas believe infertility is caused by a [754] curse, or by sin done in one's previous life, or by [783] the sins of one's ancestors. In some villages a childless man would allow his brother to have [837] coitus with his wife in an attempt to gain off- [835] spring.

842 I was unable to identify any definite medicine for infertility. A barren girl was inspected nude by 759 a therapist and told that "she was intended to be a male and would never have childern." (Sometimes the therapist could tell from a girl's face if she were incurable, and told her so.) Nonetheless 842 the female therapist later on (around 1930) made 759 a positive suggestion for curing the barren girl: 755 she should get hold of a small boy just after he 839 had defecated, and while his penis was in a somewhat erect state; she should then gently suck on his organ. This was probably a reflection of the [827] idea offered somewhere in the Puranas that the semen of small boys is in vaporous form; later it becomes liquid; and in old age it has become solid. It is highly doubtful, however, whether any Badagas believe a woman can be inseminated through the mouth.

842 This particular therapist did have a medicine 759 for infertility, but apparently died with her secret long before I worked in her villages. She did know of a plant that cured the affliction, and once mentioned to a daughter-in-law that the cure was very difficult and that she had very high standards for its proper performance. In administering the medicine she also told women they should love their husbands to the utmost, for they were usually barren simply because their minds were not

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saying anything." The man remained quiet. Then the exorcist rubbed his hand around the plate of rice, and while staring at the woman said some spells. Next he told her to come back to her own seat, and she did. Then he again told the ghost it was past 0800 hrs. and the ghost had not yet left. It replied that it would go if it were given music, hymn-singing and a picture of Murugan. Then, on a relative's suggestion, the proceedings were postponed. That evening they held a *pu:ja* in one of the houses, with this same exorcist in charge. He gave a small religious picture to the ghost, and it went away—if indeed it was ever there!

Other Mental Disturbances

8.7. Cases of insanity are rarely observed in Badaga villages, not because of their infrequency but because the victims are usually killed off by their relatives with an over-dose of opium hidden in some food. In 1970 a madman hobbled with chains could however be seen in one village, but this was very unusual. Insanity is thought to be caused by a demoness, *Ka:teri pe:* who possesses a man, takes his food from him, will not leave him, and ultimately brings exhaustion by not letting him rest properly.

8.8. Witchcraft accusations are common in many parts of India (Epstein 1959), but among the Badagas this kind of paranoid behaviour does not occur *within* the community. Witchcraft is nonetheless present, but it is only the Kurumba and Irula sorcerers and occasional Todas (Rivers 1906: 262; Francis 1908: 144) whom Badagas accuse of it. This displacement of anxiety onto members of another tribe probably helps reduce it effectively. In one recent case a newly married man was apparently experiencing sexual frustrations with his wife: at any rate, he claimed that very often as he slept with his wife at night in a room off the veranda a Kurumba came, separated the two, and built a low brick wall in the bed between them. Such a thing could occur, it was believed, because the Kurumbas had the power to open a bolted door from the outside. The only known way to curtail a Kurumba's powers is to either knock out one of his teeth or cut off his hair (and probably burn it). Important in the containment of witchcraft is the fact that each cluster of Badaga villages appoints a Kurumba sorcerer to protect those Badagas from the sorcery of his fellow tribesmen. His concern for the welfare of his Badaga hosts is expressed symbolically by the key role he plays

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in the festivals that mark the sowing and the harvesting of Badaga crops (Francis 1908: 154). This was in great contrast to the other Kurumbas, who were "believed to be possessed of the power of outraging women, removing their livers, and so causing their death, while the wound heals by magic, so that no trace of the operation is left" (Thurston 1912: 232). An old Badaga therapist told me there is a plant species which neither goats nor any cattle will eat. The Kurumba takes a leaf of it and then with this touches the body of his victim. It opens up and he removes all of the internal organs, replacing them with any kind of rubbish. Then by touching the body opening again with the same leaf, the sorcerer closes up the wound and leaves the victim to die over the next few days. Otherwise it is said that these people can come to a Badaga village "in the form of files, dogs or cats to kill those who have refused their demands" (Benbow 1930: 11). Although the Kurumbas claim to have ceased all sorcery since a council meeting around 1956, some Badagas still fear their abilities and some Kurumbas still believe in them. Even in recent years, however, Badagas have not become the subjects of witchcraft accusation themselves.

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8.9. There is a medicine to cure fear, given in a wide variety of circumstances. If for example one member of a newlywed couple feels fearful about his or her sexual obligations (cf. 3.9), a knowledgeable woman provides some of this medicine. It is made with some cockspur flower leaf, which is crushed and swallowed with water or milk, morning and night, for three or five days, beginning on a Sunday, Tuesday or Friday morning.

Some other treatments for fear have been discussed above, in the section on childhood maladies (5.40-5.41).

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task, and does not put it on again till she has bathed herself at the end of the pollution period.

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Today each cluster of villages (i.e. Panchayat Board) has one trained nurse and two or three midwives appointed by the State Government. The later are just experienced Badaga midwives with no formal training who happen to have been recommended for the position.

Exorcists and Shaman s

791 (462) (751)

10.7. Badaga exorcists are always male, and are very few in number. As often as not Badagas' ghosts have to be exorcized by non-Badaga exorcists. These men may also have lesser therapeutic skills, such as making talismans to ward off fevers and evil influences from the children who wear them. The idiosyncratic nature of exorcism is sufficiently indicated by the examples in Chapter 8 and calls for no further elaboration here.

756 177 (791)

The most feared *mantrava:dis* (shamans) in the Nilgiris were members of the Kurumba tribe, one of whom might be "called in on all occasions of blight and murrain to propitiate or scare the demon of disease"—if such there be (Breeks 1873: 53). Though this may still occasionally happen, I find no record of Kurumbas acting as exorcists to the Badagas, even though they did offer much supernatural protection to them from the sorcery of other malicious Kurumbas ; and they do sometimes try to cure the sick. Thus, "In 1891, the inmates of a single Kurumba but were said to have been murdered, and the hut burnt to ashes, because one of the family had been treating a sick Badaga child, and failed to cure it.... Again, in 1900, a whole family of Kurumbas were murdered, of which the head, who had a reputation as a medicine man, was believed to have brought disease and death into a Badaga village." (Thurston 1912: 233-34 ; also 1909 : 86). The Badagas were never so brutal with their own therapists, but the latter never seemed to be holding the threat of sorcery over the heads of their fellows. The worst that an unpopular therapist might have to suffer would be the mockery of an appropriate proverb; for instance, "He has healed others, but cannot cure himself" (Metz 1864 :95), or "It is half bad if you do something [wrong] when you know about it; entirely bad if you do it when you are ignorant."

(754) 759 (754) (626) (539)

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754 (*c*) Illness can also be the work of non-Badaga shamans or
177 sorcerers, who can send a bad spirit into the victim. As with ghost
753 possession, it has to be removed by an exorcist who knows the
[755] appropriate spells. It is said that in earlier days every Kurumba who had learnt sorcery was allowed to try his power sout. This would be decided by a formal council of the tribe, who would give the novices a stipulated period, usually one to four weeks, during which the young men could test their abilities. The Badagas would then be warned of what was to come, so the villagers could take every precaution and stay indoors at night. Each youth was permitted to kill one man by sorcery during this period. Deaths in the
[761] Badaga community were also occasionally ascribed to the sorcery of Todas (Rivers 1906: 261, 635); and Kurumbas say there are many Badaga sorcerers too.

828 (*d*) Emotional and mental problems are otherwise said to be the
753 result of sins done by a man's ancestors, whereas bodily diseases
783 are in most cases an effect of the patient's own sins, as in the case of ulceration cited below (see *i*). Thus if the wealthy man becomes poor, or a poor man becomes rich, he attributes the change of fortune to the deeds of his ancestors. If a man lacks appetite, or does not enjoy his life or possessions, then he has a sickness resulting from the sins of his ancestors. There is no cure for it; and so if many cures are attempted and none works, it is thereby known that he has an illness caused by ancestral sin. Leprosy and mental diseases are seen as ultimately caused by that same sin. (As an explanation for the therapist's impotence this is of course very effective.)

732 (*e*) Often we find frequency of an infirmity being explained as
826 an effect of "blood." For example, in one family there are two girls and five boys. One boy and both girls are normal, but three other boys are deaf and dumb, and one is fairly deaf but can talk. As the situation was explained to me, "there must be some wrong in the parents' blood." This is perhaps still an allusion to ancestral sin.

753 (*f*) More immediate causes of some illnesses lie in one's diet or
261 bodily activities, even in uncleanliness. Among the dietary problems there is a general malady called *so:lu*, "over-heat," caused by eating insufficient milk products. Eating bad food, or eating too quickly, can also bring unfortunate results.

753 (*g*) Over-exertion may dislodge the colon or an artery and bring
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